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ABSTRACT

Survey and interview responses from a nonrandom sample of 116 paraprofessionals and 68 administrators described the need for and the content of a proposed undergraduate program in transitional services at California State University Long Beach (CSULB). All participants were employed to help handicapped youths and adults move from education to employment, by providing transitional services. The number of available transitional services positions so far outstripped the number of trained job applicants that few administrators included previous training among their hiring criteria. Over 90 percent of the paraprofessional respondents were interested in additional training, and nearly 80 percent were interested in undergraduate degrees with specialization in transitional services. Respondents confirmed that competencies identified by a literature review represented, with only two exceptions, a comprehensive and effective personnel preparation program. The competencies were in these areas: assessing program and learner needs; planning instructional components; implementing instructional components; job site instruction; and instructional evaluation. Respondents suggested adding segments on first aid and on terminology from related and interdependent fields of study. Experiential application of conceptual material was considered essential. Such a program should be established at CSULB and should offer certification for paraprofessionals as well as an undergraduate degree. Researchers should track the shifts in responsibilities among transitional services paraprofessionals over time. (Survey instruments and 45 references are appended.) (CML)

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ASSESSMENT OF PERSONNEL NEEDS AND IDENTIFICATION OF TRAINING PROGRAM COMPETENCIES FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS IN TRANSITIONAL SERVICES*

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ABSTRACT

ASSESSMENT OF PERSONNEL NEEDS AND IDENTIFICATION OF TRAINING PROGRAM COMPETENCIES FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS IN TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

By

Judith A. Morehouse

May 1989

The purpose of this study was to determine the need for and components of an undergraduate transitional services training sequence for paraprofessionals within the extant Vocational Education Program at California State University, Long Beach. This process was accomplished by collecting data which examined (a) the need for trained transitional services paraprofessionals at state and local levels, (b) the preparation needs of transition paraprofessionals, and (c) an identification of competencies that should be included in a transition training sequence.

Utilizing employed transition agency administrators, supervisors, and paraprofessionals throughout California as participants, data were collected through survey instruments

and personal interviews. After the data were analyzed, the results were compared to the findings from a related literature review and a recommendation made to formulate an undergraduate transitional services training sequence at California State University, Long Beach.

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I wish to also acknowledge the important contribution made by all the questionnaire and interview participants in this study. There are too many to recognize individually; however, I want to extend my gratitude to each of them.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

By stipulating equal public educational opportunities for all handicapped youth, the 1975 Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) focused national attention on the inherent rights of these individuals. Their lifestyles, previously unknown to mainstream America, were illuminated; and the facts revealed that limited life options were available to the majority. Sheltered workshops supported by transient funding sources; expensive and often poorly administered private homes; and overcrowded, understaffed rehabilitation services represented typical service choices and offered little promise for a handicapped individual seeking an autonomous existence. It became apparent that once these handicapped youth left their secondary school settings, unless relatively affluent or with strong parental backing, future growth and development were unlikely.

Once achieving a measure of success in the public educational arena with the passage of PL 94-142, the advocates for "rights for the handicapped" began to address the post-public school educational issues hindering their

constituents. The disproportionately high unemployment rates of this population and the paucity of their employment training options began to surface and capture the interest of legislators. It became increasingly evident that to fully utilize the new educational gains, other public services needed to address the post-public school needs of these individuals.

Through the concerted efforts of educators, legislators, and parental advocacy groups, the 1983 Amendments to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act were enacted. Consequently, monies became available through the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), for promoting the expansion of programs that would assist youth and adults with handicaps in obtaining meaningful employment. Under the rubric of transitional services, these programs attempted to establish interagency networks that would aid the special education student in making a successful adjustment from school to productive employment in the community.

Beginning stages of the OSERS transitional services initiative included emphases on (a) creating effective, supported employment models within secondary and postsecondary educational and employment settings; (b) identifying and coordinating the responsibilities of the various public service agencies that served youth and adults with

handicaps; and (c) determining the training needs of key personnel working within these models and service delivery agencies (Wehman 1986; Whitehead 1987; Will 1987). As the pilot programs of OSERS became operational and evaluative data became available, it became increasingly clear that preparation programs for personnel working within the transition area needed greater attention. Evaluation data indicated that program outcomes were linked directly to the quality of the interface between the direct service providers and their clients (Wehman and others 1987). There was a significant relationship between trained and qualified personnel and the overall efficacy of the transition process.

Acknowledging the importance of skilled personnel within transition programs, OSERS has continued to fund training projects that address preparation of individuals delivering transition services to students with handicaps. However, even with national priority status, there are still critical problems in the personnel preparation area—namely, (a) shortages of trained direct service providers at both the professional and paraprofessional level and (b) shortages of university-based preservice programs to train these service providers.

Purpose of Study

In response to these personnel preparation deficiencies, California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) submitted a proposal to OSERS for funding an undergraduate transitional services training program. Operating within the extant bachelor's degree offerings of the Vocational Education Program, the planned training sequence (or specialization area) proposes to develop a cadre of trained professionals and paraprofessionals who will provide transitional services through their respective service delivery agencies to youth and adults with handicaps.

Data and information from the present study provided the basis for determining the need for and components of the paraprofessional aspect of the undergraduate transitional services training program proposed by CSULB. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to collect programmatic information in the following areas:

1. Extent of need for trained paraprofessional personnel: assessing the status and availability of trained transitional services paraprofessionals at national, state, and local levels.

2. Personnel preparation needs: (a) assessing the status and availability of university-based, preservice undergraduate transitional services training programs at national, state, and local levels; and (b) identifying

training resources for the acquisition of transitional services skills.

3. Training competencies: identifying curriculum components to be included in an undergraduate transitional services program for paraprofessionals.

Importance of the Study

The Vocational Education Program at CSULB is committed to instituting programs that reflect the needs of the local Southern California communities, are based upon current and valid research methodologies, and provide quality training to students. To maintain these standards, CSULB has a process for the implementation of a new program. Initially, a thorough needs analysis must be conducted. This study, through various methods, identified the extent of need for an undergraduate transitional services program at CSULB.

First, essential national background information was obtained through a review of related literature, focusing on an examination of the following: (a) the status of similar programs throughout the United States; (b) the specific transitional services personnel preparation needs at the national, state, and local levels; and (c) the availability of similar programs at national, state, and local levels. Next, data were collected in two phases to determine state and local paraprofessional training needs. In Phase I of this study, two questionnaires were developed and

disseminated to employees from a representative sample of public and private transitional services delivery agencies throughout California. These questionnaires polled the attitudes and opinions of both professionals and paraprofessionals in relation to paraprofessional employment patterns as well as training needs and training program content. Phase II attempted to substantiate and expand questionnaire data by examining paraprofessional preparation trends and training needs within the CSULB service region. This was accomplished through personal interviews with representative paraprofessionals and their immediate supervisors from transitional services agencies in the CSULB area. Data obtained from each phase were subsequently analyzed to determine specific training needs and to recommend a course of action for the Vocational Education Program.

Limitations to the Study

Certain limitations were encountered in the conduct of this study:

1. The sample was not randomly selected. Questionnaires were sent to and interviews conducted with selected personnel representing specific types of transitional services agencies. Hence, the generalizability of results from the Phase I and Phase II data may be restricted.

2. Due to severe time constraints in obtaining access to the survey sample in Phase I, the questionnaires used were not pilot-tested prior to distribution.

Definitions of Terms Used

The following terms are defined to clarify their use in this study:

Administrator

Any individual whose major responsibilities are to direct and/or administer a vocational education or special needs service program.

Articulation

A process between two educational institutions whereby course curriculum goals and objectives are coordinated to (a) prevent the duplication of material in a student's course of study and (b) facilitate the matriculation of the student from one educational institution into the other.

Developmentally Disabled

Any individual with a severe disability, whether mental or physical, or a combination thereof, attributable to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, dyslexia, autism, or another neurological condition of an individual found by the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to be closely related to mental retardation or to require treatment similar to that required by

mentally retarded individuals, which disability originates before such individual reaches age 22, which results in substantial functional limitations in certain specified areas of life activity, and which requires lifelong services (Davis 1980).

Direct Service Providers

Those individuals who personally interact with youth and adults in support service programs. Such persons include but are not necessarily limited to, special and vocational educators, instructional aides, job coaches, placement and employment specialists, and career technicians.

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

An annual planning process for determining the education service needs of school-aged students with handicaps.

Paraprofessional

Any person currently employed in a position not requiring a bachelor's degree and who spends approximately 90% of his/her employment time in direct contact with students or clients with handicaps.

Special Needs Learners

Youth and adults with handicaps who are in need of support services in order to succeed in education and employment settings.

Supported Employment Programs

A program, either public or private, designed to assist special needs learners in achieving and maintaining employment within the community. Broad-based in scope, individualized training programs are established for each participant to ensure his/her obtaining the social and technical skills necessary to successfully complete job requirements within employment settings.

Support Service Providers

Any individual at an administrative, professional, or paraprofessional level involved in rendering services that assist handicapped youth and adults in achieving educational and employment goals.

Transitional Services

Assistance provided to handicapped youth and adults with handicaps as they progress from secondary or postsecondary environments to employment in the community.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

This study began with a review of related literature which included the following areas: (a) the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC); (b) the Vocational and Occupational Information Center for Educators (VOICE) in Sacramento, California; (c) the Secondary Transition Intervention Institute and the Office of Career Development for Special Populations at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; (d) the California State Department of Education; (e) the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Special Education, New York City; and (f) appropriate professional journals (e.g., Exceptional Children and Journal of Vocational Education Research) and publications from the federal government publications.

Specific objectives to accomplish through this review were to:

1. Assess the status and availability of transitional services preservice training programs at national, state, and local levels;

2. Identify the specific personnel preparation needs of paraprofessionals and vocational educators at national, state, and local levels;

3. Determine the availability of trained transitional services paraprofessionals and vocational educators at the national, state, and local levels; and

4. Identify competencies that should be included in undergraduate preservice transitional services training sequences.

To enhance and substantiate the findings from the literature review, the researcher attended the Conference on the Training and Employment of Paraprofessionals in Education, Residential and Rehabilitative Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities held in New Orleans, Louisiana on April 29-May 1, 1988. Materials and information received at conference sessions were included within this review.

The findings from these combined literature review activities are reported in the following sections: "Need for Trained Personnel" (subsections "Vocational educators," "Paraprofessionals," and "Advocates") and "Identification of Transitional Services Program Components." Preceding this presentation is background information about the development of the transitional services initiative for youth and adults with handicaps.

Transitional Services Initiative

In 1984, OSERS initiated the funding of transitional services programs to serve the needs of handicapped individuals seeking employment. Madeline Will (1984), Assistant Secretary of OSERS, expressed concern about the lack of services available to the 250,000-300,000 annual special education graduates who were seeking competitive employment. Later evidence upheld her concerns. The results of a 1986 Harris poll (cited in Chadsey-Rusch 1986) presented to the Senate Subcommittee on the Handicapped yielded the following statistics from 1,000 disabled persons surveyed:

1. Sixty-seven percent between the ages of 16 and 64 were not currently employed.

2. Seventy-five percent of those persons working were part-time employees.

3. Sixty-seven percent of those who were not currently working wanted to be employed.

Employment was clearly an elusive goal for many individuals with handicaps.

Employment is perhaps the most critical achievement for individuals seeking greater autonomy and self-determination. It establishes not only economic self-sufficiency but also helps enhance a sense of personal dignity, social status, and the establishment of an adult identity (Will 1984; Williams 1981). To further encourage community integration

of individuals with handicaps, vocational programs and employment options have been developed for this special population. These supportive programs demonstrate that people with disabilities can actively participate in the work force to a much greater extent than was previously thought (Castellani 1987) and therefore offer a promising alternative for handicapped individuals seeking competitive employment (National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research n.d.). However, although supported employment programs and transitional services have gained positive recognition within the fields of special education and rehabilitation, the available literature in this area reveals that there still remain a number of important, unresolved issues.

Need for Trained Personnel

In a 1986 interview that appeared in a book by Rusch entitled Competitive Employment Issues and Strategies, Lou Brown, a pioneer of the integration movement, noted a significant shortage of experienced and trained personnel in the area of integrated job development. Wehman (1986) also considered this problem to be "critical." Whitehead (1987), in a summary of results of integrated employment programs in the United States, reported that the steady growth of transitional and supported employment initiatives in most states highlight the need for trained support staff. Similar

conclusions were reported by Anthony and Blanch (1987), who noted that personnel shortages were a significant barrier encountered when trying to organize and deliver a supported employment program.

California is no exception: all available evidence clearly indicates a paucity of trained support personnel. Within the area surrounding CSULB (Los Angeles and Orange Counties), the Employment Development Department (California 1986) forecasted a 47.3% increase in demand for paraprofessional positions (e.g., teacher assistants, job coaches) between 1980 and 1990. The projected supply of trained personnel available to assume these positions is reported to be approximately three workers for every four positions. A labor market analysis conducted for the Orange County area in June, 1987 forecasted a demand for trained personnel by 1990 nearly twice that of the available supply. Similar supply/demand ratios were reported throughout the state (California 1987a).

Exacerbating this personnel shortage within California is the existing credential and license requirements for individuals working with handicapped youth and adults. The California Education Code (Sections, 56030, 56364, and 80061) mandates postbaccalaureate training requisite to credentialing or licensing (California 1986a). Therefore, programs that provide skills training for working with the

handicapped are generally available only to those who are pursuing master's degrees or postbaccalaureate credentials. Undergraduate specializations that could serve as logical origins of training vehicles for inservice and preservice transitional services are virtually nonexistent throughout the state.

The California Department of Education is apparently aware of the magnitude of these personnel shortages. In a 1987 report entitled Agenda for the Twenty-first Century: A Blueprint for K-12 Education, the development and implementation of extensive recruiting practices for qualified teachers of special education students was a priority recommendation (California 1987a). Similarly, the State Plan for Vocational Education (California 1987b) acknowledged the scarcity of vocational educators trained to effectively interact with mainstreamed special education students and recommended training efforts.

Personnel Preparation Programs

Of equal concern to the personnel shortages is the lack of quality preservice training programs. Personnel lacking appropriate skills have been placed in direct service positions within the transition process. As a result, competitive outcomes have suffered (Rusch and others 1986).

Vocational Educators

With the federal guidelines established under the Carl Perkins Act, personnel preparation is once again of particular concern to vocational education. Because they possess knowledge of specific employment skills and are in effective training settings, vocational educators can play key roles in the transition process. A study conducted in Vermont by Hasazi and others (1985) examined handicapped youth who left or graduated from high school. They found a significant relationship between current employment status and vocational education. Of those students who had vocational education training, 61% were currently employed versus 45% of those who had no vocational education training. Halpern, in a 1973 Oregon study (cited in Hasazi and others 1985), found that well structured vocational training programs were effective in finding employment for mentally retarded youth, regardless of prevailing economic status.

In a position of significant influence, vocational educators must be better prepared to instruct the special needs learner (Sitlington 1986). However, effective personnel preparation programs designed to train vocational educators of students with handicaps have been and continue to be small in number (Renzaglia 1986). Clearly, the stage is set for programs that address greater preservicing of all vocational personnel. As noted by Everson and Moon (1987),

a partnership which effectively integrates the skills of both special educators and vocational educators can provide a comprehensive and successful approach to job placement for handicapped students.

Paraprofessionals

Recent trends indicate that special educators are assuming greater administrative responsibilities while preparing students for adult outcomes. An analysis of the roles of paraprofessionals suggests that their duties and responsibilities have evolved from primarily clerical to direct service technicians. This shift means a basic re-definition of teacher roles and a greater reliance upon paraprofessionals in the transition process (Boomer 1982; Everson and Moon 1987). While their responsibilities have increased, their opportunities for advancement, systematic training, and professional supervision have not (National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Special Education and Related Services 1988). Currently there is only a handful of training programs nationwide that reflect these role changes for paraprofessionals and teachers.

Paraprofessionals have the ability—and in many instances have the responsibility—to play key roles in the transition process. However, the quality of the training process and selection systems are vital to their success (Frith and Lindsey 1982; McKenzie and Houk 1986; Pickett

1980). Unfortunately, training responsibilities have primarily been assumed by local level employing agencies, often resulting in confusion of role definition and inadequate skills development. Further illustrating the impact of training and support upon paraprofessionals is a study conducted by Frith and Mims (1985). Their study identified potential causes of burnout among special education paraprofessional personnel. Stress and burnout were attributed to (a) job stagnation, with the paraprofessional locked into assignments indefinitely; (b) lack of opportunity for career advancement; and (c) inadequate training. Whitehead (1987) reported similar findings in his study on the recruitment and retention of paraprofessionals. Consequently, his recommendations included the implementation of integrated employment training programs that addressed job development, training, and retraining issues.

Much of the available literature acknowledges the importance of the roles paraprofessionals play in the successful transitioning of individuals with handicaps and supports the notion of formalized training programs and career-ladder concepts (Frith and Mims 1985; Wehman and Melia 1985; Whitehead 1987; Winking and others 1988). These formalized, preservice programs would assume dual objectives: (a) enhancing the skills of paraprofessionals and (b) providing opportunities for career advancement into

professional positions. It is important that both objectives be considered when planning preservice training programs, as research indicates differing views regarding the future direction of the paraprofessional's position. Whitehead (1987) endorses a professional position as more reflective of actual job proficiencies performed by the paraprofessional. The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Special Education and Related Services (1988) reports a movement toward a technician or "paraeducator" role. Economic realities of program agencies, however, perpetuate the more traditional paraprofessional role. Regardless of how these personnel are titled within their respective positions, their importance remains undebated; and as reliance by both administrators and clients upon these paraprofessionals increases, job performance expectations and responsibilities will undoubtedly expand. Consequently, the educational opportunities for advancement and enhancement must be implemented. In a study by Wehman and others (1987) conducted on the competitive employment experiences of 21 people labeled severely mentally retarded, the authors concluded that when successful placement was achieved, it was directly attributable to employment specialist support hours.

On April 29, 1988 in New Orleans, at the Conference on the Training and Employment of Paraprofessionals in

Education, Residential, and Rehabilitative Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities, Norman Howe, Director of the OSERS Personnel Preparation Division, addressed the issue of federal funding priorities. He strongly encouraged grant submissions from 2-year institutions interested in preservicing paraprofessionals. He contended that the fundamental technical training necessary for proficient service providers is delivered most effectively at this level. Additionally, while acknowledging the significant contribution these institutions could make to the transitional services area, he noted the paucity of such programs.

Within California, a 1985-86 survey conducted by the American Federation of Teachers revealed a total of five 2-year programs to train paraprofessionals in California. Unfortunately, none was within Los Angeles or Orange Counties.

Advocates

There is a growing awareness that the transition process must be multidisciplinary and involve several service delivery systems, parents, and advocates in order to optimize success (Wehman and others 1986). However, there are few formal training procedures that provide instruction in effective collaboration methodology and invite the interactive participation of these vital groups. Local education and service delivery agencies, for the most part, have been

responsible for initiating what training is available to paraprofessionals (Frith and Lindsey 1982; Pickett 1986), yet this casual, informal approach does not adequately sustain agency, parental, or advocacy involvement. Recommendations from Harold Russell Associates, from a 1985 contract proposal to OSERS, emphasize the importance of parent training programs and long-term preservice preparation programs that address collaborative training and service approaches.

Identification of Personnel Training Program Components

The need for well articulated personnel training programs has been clearly demonstrated in the preceding review of literature. The next task of program planners is to identify key training components to maximize the success of the participants.

To plan and implement a viable curriculum, it is important to embrace a systematic approach. Wehman (1986) outlined a plan for inservice and preservice training which included three foci crucial to the success of any such program:

1. Determine the roles the participants will assume upon completion of the training.

2. Determine the principal training content which must be taught.

3. Determine the best way to teach this content so as to enhance retention.

To provide the underpinnings of a training model, Albright's (1978) research review article was examined to determine the competencies proven effective in previous training curricula. Based upon a comparative analysis of 13 teacher competency studies, Albright identified the following competency categories: (a) assessing program and learner needs, (b) planning instruction, (c) implementing instruction, and (d) evaluating instruction. Conceptually, these categories are the same as those identified in more recent literature and have been verified by field testing. Utilizing the basic framework suggested by Albright, Table 1 summarizes specific competencies noted in the literature within the four categories. To reflect the community-based training element, an integral component of the transition process initiated after Albright's study, an additional category, "Job Site Training Instruction," was added.

The competencies in Table 1 reflect current thinking in the literature and constitute a model from which to begin the process of planning a personnel preparation training sequence. The identified competencies could be utilized as curriculum goals and provide the foundation for identifying specific course objectives.

Table 1. Personnel Preparation Program Competency Identification Table

Assessing Program and Learner Needs	Planning Training/Instructional Components	Implementing Training/Instructional Components	Job Site Training/Instruction	Instructional/Training Evaluation
Assess vocational interests of special needs learners (Sitlington 1986).	Identify characteristics of special needs learners (Asselin and Finch 1987; Sarkees and Scott 1986).	Modify facilities to accommodate the vocational training of special needs learners (Albright 1978; Sarkees and Scott 1986).	Develop strategies for working with employers and employees in industry (Sarkees and Scott 1986).	Administer and interpret criterion reference tests (California 1986b).
Assess community job availability (Wehman 1984).	Develop identification and placement procedures for special needs learners in vocational education (Sarkees and Scott 1986).	Modify curriculum to facilitate teaching of special needs learners (Albright 1978; Sarkees and Scott 1986).	Identify job placement techniques and follow-up services for special needs learners (Renzaglia 1986; Sarkees and Scott 1986; Wehman 1984).	Determine pupil programs from formal assessment devices (California 1986b).
Assess job skills within community employing agencies (Renzaglia 1986; Wehman 1984).	Establish vocational education and transitional services components in Individualized Education Programs (Sitlington 1986).	Develop evaluation and grading procedures for special needs learners (Sarkees and Scott 1986).	Select and implement curricula for development of social, functional, and life skills (California 1986b; Renzaglia 1986; Rusch and others 1986; Wehman 1981).	Design a task analysis procedure for assessing student performance and prescribing intervention (California 1986b; Salvia and Ysseldyke 1981).
Assess the various socioculturel, linguistic backgrounds of special needs learners (California 1986b).	Coordinate effective interagency collaboration (California 1986b; Sarkees and Scott 1986).	Develop task analysis as basis for instruction (California 1986b; Wehman and others 1988).	Develop supervisory skills for working with paraprofessionals (California 1986b).	Determine data collection procedures that will reflect the strengths and weaknesses of each student's performance (Wehman and others 1988).
Assess the rehabilitative, living, and support services necessary to adult learners (Rusch and others 1986).	Identify instructional techniques for special needs learners (Albright 1978; Sarkees and Scott 1986).	Develop cooperative learning techniques to increase pupils' success in courses (California 1986b).	Identify and develop job retention skills (Renzaglia 1986; Wehman 1984).	Determine assessment procedures to support student placement decisions (Salvia and Ysseldyke 1981).
	Identify techniques for instruction of job-related interpersonal and academic skills (Sitlington 1986).	Develop effective classroom management procedures (California 1986b).	Develop strategies for teaching students supportive skills such as transportation, appropriate use of leisure time, and money management (Renzaglia 1986).	

Table 1. (continued)

Assessing Program and Learner Needs	Planning Training/Instructional Components	Implementing Training/Instructional Components	Job Site Training/ Instruction	Instructional/Training Evaluation
	Plan transitional programs for special needs learners (Sitlington 1986).	Formulate skill sequences and task analyses that break activities into teachable units (Wehman and others 1988).		
	Identify community support services (i.e. counseling) to utilize in negative behavior situations (Moss and others 1986).			
	Develop strategies to include the human and environmental aspects within training components (Asselin and Finch 1987).			

Summary

Transitional services programs will likely continue to be an option available to individuals with handicaps. The U.S. Department of Education has recommitted its funding resources to expanding such services. Coupled with this growth is the need for trained personnel to provide direct services within the context of these programs. This review has identified the deficits of key professional and paraprofessional personnel both within California and in the United States. Further, it has shown that the demand for such personnel will continue to increase at a rate faster than the available supply.

Exacerbating this personnel shortage is the scarcity of personnel preparation programs. Untrained employees are continually placed in key positions within the transition process, and employment outcomes have been negatively affected. This results in the suffering of not only the clients but also the employees working in such conditions. Lack of skills and/or training; unclear role definitions; and few, if any, promotional incentives are all key components in job stress and burnout—areas of particular concern within the paraprofessional domain. Ineffective teaching and administrative strategies are problems encountered by the professionals who have not had access to preservice and/or inservice training.

In order to deliver the level of service that will maximize the employment opportunities of individuals with handicaps, it is necessary to implement quality personnel preparation programs for persons directly involved in the transition process. These programs should include the training competencies identified from the literature and presented within the framework of the five categories (i.e., "Assessing Program and Learner Needs," "Planning Training/Instructional Components," "Implementing Training/Instructional Components," "Job Site Training/Instruction," and "Training/Instructional Evaluation"). These competencies outline a core curriculum which could effectively meet the challenges raised by the diversity of program participants.

As data show that program outcomes depend greatly upon the skill level of service providers, it is essential that planned, systematic preservice personnel training programs be infused into the transition system. Through the combined efforts of university-based training and federal sponsorship of such training, the personnel preparation problems noted in this literature review can be mitigated and more viable service delivery options can continue to be offered to individuals with handicaps.

Chapter 3

Method and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to provide the information necessary to determine the efficacy of developing a grant proposal for an undergraduate specialization in transitional services within the Vocational Education Program at CSULB. In addition to the literature review, research was conducted in the following areas:

1. Need for trained personnel: Information about the status and availability of trained transitional services paraprofessionals in California and within the CSULB service region was sought.

2. Personnel preparation needs: Information about the status and availability of university-based preservice undergraduate transitional services training programs in California and within the CSULB service region was obtained.

3. Training competencies: Participants were also queried as to the curricular components that should be included in an undergraduate transitional services training sequence.

This chapter details the methods and procedures that were utilized to conduct this study.

Method of Study

By definition, this inquiry was classified as a descriptive study (Isaac and Michael 1971) designed to assess the status of transitional services paraprofessional preservice programs, personnel needs, and training competencies. By utilizing this method, data for this study were collected in two phases.

1. Phase I: Two questionnaires were sent to administrators and paraprofessionals within transitional services programs in California.

2. Phase II: Personal interviews were conducted with transitional services paraprofessionals and their immediate/direct supervisors from six agencies within the CSULB service region.

Both phases are detailed in the following format in the remainder of this section: "Purpose," "Design," "Sample," and "Analysis."

Phase I: Questionnaires

The following information details the purpose, design, and distribution of the questionnaires for Phase I of the study.

Purpose

In order to identify paraprofessional employment and training needs in the Southern California area, two

questionnaires which focused on these dimensions were distributed to the respondent groups.

Design

The first instrument, the Paraprofessional Survey (Appendix A), was developed through the literature review (Renzaglia 1986; Sarkees and Scott 1986; Wehman 1981) and in consultation with the Graduate Advisor of the Vocational Education Program at CSULB. It consisted of a series of items pertaining to training needs and employment practices and competencies of paraprofessionals working within transitional services agencies. The items were a combination of closed format responses and Likert-type scales (5 = very important, 3 = important, 1 = unimportant). The Paraprofessional Survey targeted two of the study objectives: the training needs of paraprofessionals and curricular components of a training sequence.

The second instrument, the Administrator Survey (Appendix B), was also developed through the literature review utilizing the aforementioned sources and in consultation with the Graduate Advisor. Using the same Likert scale configuration as in the paraprofessional instrument, the questions sought input from administrators working in an array of transitional services delivery agencies. This instrument focused on collecting data for the remaining objective of the study, the need for trained transition

paraprofessionals, as well as the identification of training program components.

To facilitate respondent understanding of this research, a cover letter outlining the purpose of the study, defining terms utilized within the instruments, and describing the functions of paraprofessionals and administrators was attached to the surveys. The cover letter for the two survey groups appears in Appendix C.

Sample

In order to determine personnel employment and training needs within a broad spectrum of transitional service delivery agencies, the sample population was derived by identifying generic public and private support services for handicapped youth and adults throughout California. These support service agencies included state rehabilitation programs, public secondary and postsecondary schools, private employment training programs, and parental advocacy services. From this general compilation a core list of 15 agencies was compiled.

Administrators and paraprofessionals working within these core agencies were asked to participate as questionnaire respondents. A contact person within each agency was identified and given the surveys, together with accompanying completion instructions, to distribute to all employed paraprofessionals and administrators. An effort was made to

ensure a high response rate by arranging for the agency representative to administer the questionnaires at agency meetings. Returns were recorded upon receipt, and participants were contacted until surveys from all agencies were returned. A listing of the 15 core agencies and contact personnel is shown in Appendix D.

Analysis

Data from the two surveys were analyzed and reported by the two participant groups: paraprofessionals and administrators. As the surveys were returned, individual responses were recorded by group in two areas: demographic data and program competencies. The demographic responses from each survey were totaled and the percentages calculated and reported in tables. For the scaled ratings related to training competencies, the means and standard deviations were calculated and subsequently reported in tables.

Phase II: Personal Interviews

The purpose, design, and conduct of the Phase II personal interviews are contained in the following sections of the study.

Purpose

To add contextual understanding to the findings from the literature review and the questionnaires, this phase of the study focused on isolating the specific personnel needs

and practices of paraprofessionals within transitional service agencies in the CSULB service region. Personal interviews with 21 paraprofessionals and their direct supervisors working within six targeted local agencies were conducted. The interviews occurred at the individual job locations to collect employment context data about these personnel.

Design

Interview questions were formulated from data collected from Phase I surveys, the review of the literature, and in consultation with selected faculty in vocational education at CSULB. The questions were categorized under the objectives addressed in the study: (a) need for trained paraprofessional personnel, (b) paraprofessional training needs, and (c) identification of program competencies. The supervisors were asked questions related to the first objective, while the paraprofessionals responded to questions concerning the second objective. Both groups were presented with questions targeting the third objective.

Once the initial interview instrument was developed, a pilot test was conducted with two individuals, one paraprofessional and one supervisor, working in a local transitional services agency. The criteria for the participants were as follows:

1. Paraprofessional

a. Individual must be employed in an agency which provided transition services for handicapped youth and adults.

b. Individual must spend 90% of employment time in direct service capacity with handicapped youths and/or adults.

c. Individual must be employed in current position for a minimum of 1 year.

2. Supervisor

a. Individual must be responsible for supervision of supported and/or competitive employment services to youths and/or adults with handicaps.

b. Individual must have supervised a participating paraprofessional for a minimum of 6 months.

c. Individual must have been employed by agency for at least 1 year.

d. Individual must have earned a BA or MA degree with some academic preparation in the education of persons with handicaps.

Feedback from the pilot tests was utilized to refine the interview document. Copies of the final interview instruments are included in Appendices E and F.

Sample

To ensure representativeness of the variety of agencies providing programs and services to handicapped youth and adults, six local service agencies were identified. Once the list was compiled, key personnel within each agency were contacted and asked to participate in the study. The request was for four to five interviews: one each with three to four paraprofessionals and one with the direct supervisor of these individuals. The total number of participating agencies was six (Appendix G), yielding 6 supervisor interviews and 21 paraprofessional interviews.

Analysis

Data derived from Phase II interviews were reported by group in two categories: demographic data and identification of program competencies. Responses to each question were totaled and reported in tables via means, standard deviations, and percentages.

Collective Analysis of Phase I and II Training Competency Data

To collapse all the training competency data retrieved from both phases of the study into a single training program sequence, a collective analysis was performed. Initially, the means from the Phase I administrative and paraprofessional competency ratings were comparatively assessed. Next, training component data from the Phase II supervisory

and paraprofessional personal interviews were combined and categorized. Categories were determined from those originally identified from the review of the literature: assessing program and learner needs, planning training/instructional components, implementing training/instructional components, job site training instruction, and instructional/training evaluation. Once each component was categorized, a table illustrating the Phase II competencies was formulated. The data from this table were compared to the Table 1 data to assess similarities and disparities. Because Table 1 data were derived from the literature review and subsequently served as the basis for the competencies included on the Phase I survey instruments, a comparison between these sources integrated all the data from the various aspects of the study.

Upon completion of the study, an executive summary was prepared and distributed to all interview respondents.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis of Data

This study was conducted to assist the CSULB Vocational Education Program in determining the feasibility of preparing an OSERS grant proposal to establish an undergraduate specialization in transition services. To ascertain the extent of need for such a program, data were collected in two phases to examine the following objectives: (a) need for trained transitional service paraprofessionals and (b) paraprofessional preparation needs. Additional data were also collected about the third study objective, i.e., the competencies that should be included in the training sequence for an undergraduate training program.

The Phase I and Phase II data collection process utilized paraprofessionals and administrators working within a broad range of transition agencies. The intent of the Phase I survey instrument was to obtain baseline information about the personnel needs and training requirements of paraprofessional transition workers throughout California. To determine the needs of paraprofessionals within agencies specifically in the CSULB service region, Phase II personal interviews were conducted.

The remainder of this chapter will report the results and analysis in the following format. The data are presented by participating groups. More specifically, paraprofessional data from Phases I and II, concerned with the second and third objectives of the study—paraprofessional preparation needs and the identification of training sequence—are reported. Following the paraprofessional data, administrative information is presented in relationship to the first and third objectives: the need for trained transitional services paraprofessionals and the identification of program competencies. Finally, to consolidate the Phase I and II data regarding the third objective and thereby facilitate the formulation of conclusions about the training curricular content, a collective analysis is presented. This collective analysis collapses all training component data by (a) comparing administrator and paraprofessional Phase I competency ratings and (b) consolidating and assessing supervisory and paraprofessional Phase II interview data responses.

Results and Analysis

In this section of the study, the data results from Phases I and II are illustrated.

Paraprofessionals

The responses received from the Paraprofessional Survey and the professional interviews are detailed as follows.

Phase I: Survey. A total of 95 paraprofessionals responded to this survey. As shown in Table 2, approximately one half (49.4%) of the employed paraprofessionals reported a high school diploma as the highest level of education; 15.0% reported earning an Associate of Arts degree; 31.2%, a Bachelor of Arts degree; and 4.3% had received graduate training. Regarding length of employment, 48.4% of the respondents had been employed in their current position for less than 1 year and 80% of the respondents reported less than 3 years of employment experience in their present position.

To determine the extent and sources of transitional training received by paraprofessionals, Phase I participants were asked to indicate if they had received training prior to employment and, if they had, to report all sources of this training. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated they had received training prior to obtaining their current employment positions. Of these respondents, only 37 (57.8%) had received training from college or university courses.

To establish the availability of training resources, the survey participants were asked if there were university

Table 2. Paraprofessional Demographic Data

Category	Number	Percentage
Education level (N = 93)		
High school	46	49.4%
A.A. degree	14	15.0%
B.A. degree	29	31.2%
Post-graduate	4	4.3%
Length of current employment (N = 94)		
Less than 1 year	46	48.4%
1-2 years	20	21.1%
2-3 years	9	9.5%
More than 3 years	19	20.0%
Training for current position (N = 95)		
Yes	64	67.4%
No	31	32.6%
Sources of training (N = 64)		
College and/or university	37	57.8%
Inservice	45	47.3%
On the job	50	78.1%
Awareness of university courses (N = 91)		
Yes	36	39.6%
No	12	13.2%
Uncertain	43	47.3%
Interested in upgrading skills (N = 94)		
Very	41	43.6%
Somewhat	47	50.0%
No	6	6.4%
Interested in B.A. degree (N = 92)		
Very	34	37.0%
Somewhat	34	37.0%
No	24	26.1%

Note. Total N = 95. "B.A." is used in the generic sense of an undergraduate degree.

courses within their commuting vicinity offering transition training. Of the 91 respondents, 36 (roughly 40%) of the paraprofessionals were aware of such university training programs.

To determine the paraprofessionals' degree of interest in pursuing transition training, the participants rated their desire to (a) upgrade skills and/or (b) pursue a B.A. degree with an emphasis on transition services. Of the 94 respondents, about 94% expressed interest in upgrading skills and 74% stated interest in pursuing a B.A. degree.

In an attempt to identify training components to be included in the proposed program sequence, respondents were also asked to rate a list of personnel competencies. The means and standard deviations were calculated for each competency and listed in Table 3. The three competencies ranked the highest were most directly related to placing and/or working with individuals with handicaps in competitive employment situations: (a) job placement and follow-up for special needs learners, (b) preparing transitional programs for special needs learners, and (c) strategies in working with employers and employees in industry. Although all competencies were judged as important to include in a training sequence, two competencies were rated below 4.0: (a) modifying facilities to accommodate the training of

Table 3. Rank Ordering of Training Components Identified by Paraprofessionals

Training Component	$\bar{X}$	SD
Job placement and follow-up for special needs learners	4.52	.73
Preparing transitional programs for special needs learners	4.48	.76
Strategies in working with employers and employees in industry	4.46	.74
Instructional techniques for special needs learners	4.46	.76
Vocational assessment of special needs learners	4.44	.74
Techniques for instruction of job-related interpersonal skills	4.39	.75
Coordination of support agencies	4.39	.86
Identification and placement of special needs learners	4.37	.75
Establishing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)	4.39	.86
Curriculum modification for special needs learners	4.27	.84
General characteristics of special needs learners	4.12	.86
Techniques for instruction of job-related academic skills	4.11	.86
Modifying facilities to accommodate the training of special needs learners	3.91	.93
Evaluation and grading procedures for special needs learners	3.73	.92

Note. N = 95.

special needs learners (rated 3.91) and (b) evaluation and grading procedures for special needs learners (rated 3.73).

Phase II: Personal interviews. Interview data from the 21 paraprofessionals are displayed in Table 4. Of the 61.9% reporting prior training, about half received this training through college or university courses. Approximately 70% of the respondent group had not received training in relation to their present positions prior to their employment.

To establish the availability of training resources, interviewees were asked if there were university courses within their commuting vicinity offering transition training. Only 6 (28.6%) of the respondents were aware of transition services training program opportunities. Of the 6 reporting knowledge of training programs, 4 identified university and/or community college-based training.

When asked if their job responsibilities had changed since they were hired, 81% of the 21 respondents reported changes. Of this group, only 23.5% stated they had received training to support their new responsibilities.

Phase II data were also analyzed to ascertain the paraprofessionals' degree of interest in pursuing additional education in the area of transition services. When each of the 21 Phase II interviewees was asked if he/she was interested in (a) university skill enhancement courses that would

Table 4. Paraprofessional Training Information

Site (N = 6)	Number of Paraprofessionals Interviewed (N = 21)	Status of Preservicing: Previous Experience Yes	Previous Experience No	Sources of Previous Training OTJ	IN	CC	UN	Other	Training Resources: Preservice Training Sources Yes	Preservice Training Sources No	Sources CC	Sources UN	Sources IN	Sources Other	Responsibility Changes Yes	Responsibility Changes No	Training Sources UN	Training Sources SH	Training Sources ROP	Interested in Certificate	Interested in B.A.
1	3	1	2			1				3	1				1	2				3	2
2	3	3		3			1	1		3					2	1		1		1	2
3	4	4		3			2		3	1	1	3	1		3	1	2			3	2
4	4	2	2	2		1		1	2	2	1		2	2	4			1	2	2	4
5	3	1	2	1		1	1		1	2	1	1	1		3					1	2
6	4	2	2	2		1				4					4					2	3

Note. Adapted from M. B. Miles and A. M. Huberman, 1984, Qualitative data analysis, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 79-203. OTJ = on the job; IN = inservice; CC = community college; UN = university; SH = shadowing; ROP = Regional Occupation Program.

lead to a certificate indicating transitional skills expertise and/or (b) a bachelor's degree with an emphasis on transitional services, 60% stated interest in the skills enhancement sequence and 72% were interested in the bachelor's degree. All of the 21 interviewees were interested in either one or both of these options.

Table 5 displays the training competencies considered important by the paraprofessionals. This table provides respondent data for four areas: (a) critical aspects of present position, (b) skills necessary to deliver these responsibilities, (c) additional skills that would enhance employee effectiveness, and (d) topics that should be included in a paraprofessional training sequence. The information from the 21 interviews is listed under the corresponding questions in descending order of obtained response. The number following each response indicates the total number of respondents identifying the item.

Of importance are the responses pertaining to knowledge of the client's/student's disability. Although in somewhat different phraseology, this item was recorded as the top response in two of the four question areas and second in the remaining two areas. Additionally, the responses regarding behavior management techniques and issues were consistently high, ranking first and second in two of the four categories. Underlining the human dimension of the interviews,

Table 5. Training Competencies Identified from Paraprofessional Interviews

Training Competency	Number of Respondents
Critical aspects of present job	
Understanding client needs	13
Desire to help client succeed	10
Gaining client trust	9
Good communication with employers	6
Background in job being taught	4
Important skills needed on present job	
Patience	17
Understanding limitations of disability	9
Assessing client's potential	7
Good social skills	6
Sincere interest in success of client	6
Empathy	5
Adaptability	4
Enthusiasm	2
Organization	2
Calm demeanor	1
Additional skills needed	
Knowledge of specific disabilities	13
Behavior management techniques	7
Knowledge of job market	2
Instructional strategies	2
Sign language	1
Assertiveness	1
Recommended content areas for university	
Behavior management	15
Nature of disabilities	13
Working with employers and employees	8
Instructional strategies	7
Counseling skills	6
Legal issues	4
Vocabulary/terminology within the profession	3
Developing client's independent problem-solving skills	3

Note. N = 21.

the desire to help the client succeed, gaining the trust of the client, and patience were considered important skills and/or dimensions of their positions by 90% of the interviewees.

Administrators

The following results were obtained through questionnaires from and interviews with transition program administrators.

Phase I: Surveys. A total of 47 administrators responded to this survey (Table 6).

To ascertain the administrators' familiarity with the status of paraprofessional employment, the Phase I Administrator Survey asked for the number of paraprofessionals currently employed in the administrator's agency. Of the 47 administrative respondents, all but 4 presently employed at least 1 paraprofessional. These 43 reported a total of 167 full-time and 131.5 part-time employed paraprofessionals.

Question 2 on this same instrument asked about the need for previous experience for paraprofessionals hired to perform transition responsibilities. Approximately 60% of the administrators reported that previous experience was not required; however, 31% of these respondents wrote on the instrument that experience was preferable. When asked about the sources of previous experience, the administrators

Table 6. Phase I Administrator Reporting of Paraprofessional Employment Data

Data	Number	Percentage
Number of employed paraprofessionals		
Full-time	167	
Part-time	131.5	
Previous experience required for paraprofessionals		
Yes	18	38.3%
No	29	61.7%
Source(s) of previous experience		
Inservice	23	42.4%
Community college	10	24.4%
On the job	42	84.8%
University	15	31.9%
Number of paraprofessionals interested in pursuing B.A. degree		
Estimated	64.5	
Importance of transition services B.A.		
Very important	5	10.7%
Quite important	15	31.9%
Important	19	40.4%
Somewhat important	5	10.7%
Unimportant	3	6.4%

Note. N = 47.

indicated that 84.4% of the paraprofessionals received their experience from on-the-job training, while 42.4% were reported to have obtained some or all of their experience from employer-based inservice programs.

To assist in determining the extent of need within service agencies/programs for personnel trained in transitional services, the administrators were asked to respond to the following: "How important is the establishment of a specialization area in vocational education and transition services as an undergraduate degree program?" Although collectively the respondents were supportive, individual responses to this item were mixed. Thirty-four percent rated it as quite to very important, while 66% considered it moderately important to unimportant.

Table 7 presents a rank order of the administrators' ratings of specific competencies needed in a paraprofessional training program. Job placement and follow-up for special needs learners and strategies in working with employers and employees in industry were ranked first and second, respectively. Those competencies ranked lowest were vocational assessment of special needs learners, modifying facilities to accommodate the vocational training of special needs learners, and evaluation and grading procedures for special needs learners.

Table 7. Rank Ordering of Training Components Identified by Administrators

Training Component	$\overline{X}$	SD
Job placement and follow-up for special needs learners	4.55	.76
Strategies in working with employers and employees in industry	4.48	.86
Instructional techniques for special needs learners	4.48	.87
General characteristics of special needs learners	4.34	.88
Curriculum modification for special needs learners	4.27	.89
Establishing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)	4.25	1.06
Coordination of support agencies	4.21	.98
Techniques for instruction of job-related interpersonal and academic skills	4.19	1.08
Identification and placement procedures for special needs learners	4.14	.87
Preparing transitional programs for special needs learners	4.10	1.09
Vocational assessment of special needs learners	3.87	1.12
Modifying facilities to accommodate the vocational training of special needs learners	3.69	1.11
Evaluation and grading procedures for special needs learners	3.40	.87

Note. N = 47.

Phase II: Personal interviews. Six supervisors from local area transition agencies were interviewed to ascertain local agency characteristics and paraprofessional personnel preparation needs. Data on these are shown in Table 8. In terms of paraprofessional employment opportunities, all six participating agencies had current employment openings. Additionally, all six agencies reported receiving fewer qualified applicants than the number of position openings.

Further, when the supervisors were asked about previous transition training for their paraprofessional applicants, five of the supervisors stated that previous transitional service experience was not a requirement for potential employees. The one agency requiring transition experience reported that generally a qualified applicant could not be found. Significant to this study is that all six supervisors reported that transition experience was a desirable asset; however, because few if any applicants had this experience, it was not considered to be a realistic requirement.

Finally, the six supervisors were asked to identify any incentives or employment growth opportunities offered by their respective agencies to their employed paraprofessionals. Five reported no growth or incentive opportunities. The one offering such opportunities stated that stipends for

Table 8. Phase II Supervisor Reporting of Paraprofessional Employment Data

Site	Current Openings Number	Current Openings Description	Qualifications Yes/No	Qualifications Description	Employment Openings Applicants	Employment Openings Qualified	Previous Experience Yes/No	Previous Experience Comments	Growth Opportunities
1	1	Job coach - 1	Yes	Background in special education	1-2	1	No	Cannot get previous experience, so do not require	No
2	3	Supervisor - 1 Instructional assistant - 1 Job coach - 1	No		0-1	0	No	Cannot find applicants with previous experience	No
3	2	Instructional assistant - 1 Job coach - 1	No		1	0	No	Cannot get applicants with experience	No
4	7	Supervisor - 3 Job coach - 3 Employment specialist - 1	Yes	Background in transition services	15-20	0-1	Yes	But generally cannot get experience	No
5	2	Instructional assistant - 2	No		20	1-2	No	Cannot get experienced help	No
6	3	Instructional assistant - 2 Supervisor - 1	Yes	Background with special populations	1	0	No	Cannot get experience	Yes[a]

Note. N = 6.

[a]Stipends for coursework.

conferences or related courses were available to the paraprofessionals.

Table 9 presents the paraprofessional training competencies identified by the supervisors. Divided into three categories—skills, materials, and information—the responses for each category are ranked in descending order with the specific number of times mentioned by the interviewees in parentheses. Handicapping conditions and behavior management techniques were the training components ranked highest.

Collective Analysis of Phase I and II Training Competency Data

To identify the training competencies for inclusion in the proposed training sequence, administrator and paraprofessional responses from the two-phased study were compared. This comparison was accomplished by consolidating the data from each phase into two tables. A description of these analyses follows.

Phase I

The comparative analysis of Phase I training component data was conducted utilizing the following criteria:

1. Any competency with a mean of 4.0-5.0 on either survey instrument was rated as "very important."

2. A competency with a mean between 3.0 and 3.9 was rated as "important."

Table 9. Training Competencies Identified from Supervisor Interviews

Training Sequence Components		
Skills	Materials	Information
Behavior management (6)	Experiential/practicum training (5)	Handicapping conditions (6)
Instructional strategies (5)	Shadowing (4)	Community resources (6)
Task analysis (5)	Current related research (4)	Legal issues (5)
Mobility strategies (5)	Field trips (2)	Public relations/marketing strategies (4)
Communication/listening skills (3)	Speakers (1)	Terminology of related agencies/disciplines
Assessing client's potential (3)		Vocational education opportunities (1)
First aid (2)		
Vocational objectives (2)		
Interviewing skills (1)		
Professional distance (1)		

Note. N = 6. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of respondents in that category.

3. All competencies rated either "important" or "very important" were noted for inclusion in a transition training sequence.

As shown in Table 10, all but two of the competencies received a "very important" rating from both groups. The only competency with a disparate rating from the groups was vocational assessment of special needs learners, which received a higher rating from the paraprofessionals. The administrator and paraprofessional ratings were quite similar overall.

Phase II

Phase II paraprofessional and supervisor training competency data were collapsed into Table 11. This consolidation was performed by reviewing the paraprofessionals' responses to the "additional skills" and "topics for training sequence" questions noted in Table 5 and the supervisors' responses to the "training sequence components" illustrated in Table 9. Each skill and/or training component was classified under one of five major headings to correspond with the review of literature findings reported in Table 1. Within each of these five categories, the competencies were listed in order of greatest to least number of received responses. The total number of respondents selecting each competency is included in parentheses after the corresponding competency. Finally, the data in Table 11

Table 10. Comparison of Phase I Paraprofessional- and Administrator-identified Competency Ratings

Competency	Paraprofessional (N = 95) $\bar{X}$	SD	Administrator (N = 47) $\bar{x}$	SD
General characteristics of special needs learners	4.12	.86	4.34	.88
Identification and placement of special needs learners	4.37	.75	4.14	.87
Vocational assessment of special needs learners	4.44	.74	3.87	1.12
Establishing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)	4.32	.88	4.25	1.06
Consolidation of support agencies	4.39	.86	4.21	.98
Modifying facilities to accommodate the training of special needs learners	3.91	.93	3.69	1.11
Curriculum modification for special needs learners	4.27	.84	4.27	.89
Instructional techniques for special needs learners	4.46	.76	4.48	.87
Techniques for instruction of job-related interpersonal skills[a]	4.39	.75	4.19	1.08
Techniques for instruction of job-related academic skills[a]	4.11	.86		
Evaluation and grading procedures for special needs learners	3.73	.92	3.40	1.06
Preparing transitional programs for special needs learners	4.48	.76	4.10	1.09
Strategies in working with employers and employees in industry	4.46	.74	4.48	.86
Job placement and follow-up for special needs learners	4.52	.73	4.55	.76

[a]These two questions were consolidated into one on the administrator survey—hence, only one response.

Table 11. Summary of Phase II Identification of Competency Data

Assessing Program and Learner Needs	Planning Training/ Instructional Components	Implementing Training/ Instructional Components	Job Site Training/Instruction	Instructional/Training Evaluation
Understand handicapping conditions (9).	Understand effective instructional strategies (2).	Utilize counseling skills (6).	Understand behavior management skills (21).	(none)
Assess client/student potential (3).	Know community resources (6).	Perform task analysis (5).	Strategies for working with employers and employees (8).	
Establish vocational objectives (2).	Utilize community-based practicum experiences (5).	Adequate communication/ listening skills (3).	Utilize mobility training strategies (5).	
Understand medical implications (2).	Utilize job shadowing (4).	Understand/relate agencies' terminology (2).	Understand legal issues (5).	
Recognize client abuse (1).	Know vocational training opportunities (3).	Maintain professional distance (1).	Utilize appropriate public relations/marketing strategies (4).	
Understand sexuality issues (1).		Know sign language (1).	Utilize normalization techniques (4).	
First aid training (1).		Utilize assertiveness training (1).		

Note. N = 27. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of respondents in that category.

were compared to the source interview summaries and Tables 5 and 9 to determine whether rankings and categorizations were consistent with the actual interview data. No discrepancies were noted.

Interestingly, the supervisors' responses paralleled those of the paraprofessionals. Handicapped conditions and behavior management issues were the training components ranked highest by both groups.

Summary

In review, this study was conducted to assist the CSULB Vocational Education Program in determining the extent of need for and the training competencies to be included in an undergraduate transition services specialization sequence. The paraprofessional data collection process focused on obtaining information targeting two of the three objectives of the study: the personnel training needs of paraprofessionals and the identification of training that should be included in a training program sequence. Administrators were surveyed and interviewed to determine the first objective of the study—the need for trained paraprofessionals working within transition agencies—as well as input regarding the identification of training program curricular components. Once the data were recorded, they were analyzed as they pertained to the objectives. First, the paraprofessional data were tabled and reported. Next, the administra-

tive data were similarly detailed. Finally, a collective analysis of both Phase I and Phase II administrative and paraprofessional data for the identification of program competencies was performed. This collective analysis yielded a consolidated report that could be compared to the literature findings to subsequently finalize a single program curriculum.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

This study was conducted to provide information for a program proposal submitted to OSERS by CSULB. Planned as an offering within the extant Vocational Education Program, the proposed program would provide transitional services training at an undergraduate level. The purpose of this study was to collect data to examine the following objectives as they related to the OSERS proposal:

1. Extent of need for trained paraprofessional personnel: assessing the status and availability of trained transition services personnel at national, state, and local levels.

2. Paraprofessional preparation needs: (a) assessing the status and availability of university-based, preservice undergraduate transitional services training programs at national, state, and local levels; and (b) identifying training resources for the acquisition of transitional services skills.

3. Training competencies: identifying curriculum components to be included in an undergraduate transitional services program.

The study was accomplished by utilizing a multi-stage approach to the data collection process. Initially, a review of related literature was completed to gain important national background information regarding the three study objectives. Next, to determine state and local area transition personnel needs, data were collected in two phases. In Phase I two questionnaires were developed and administered to employees from a representative cross-section of transition service agencies throughout California. Through the use of these questionnaires, the attitudes and opinions of the state's paraprofessionals and administrators about transition needs were ascertained. Phase II was a series of personal interviews with paraprofessionals and their direct supervisors working within local area transition agencies. These interviews were conducted to establish the specific needs of potential program participants and to substantiate Phase I data.

The purpose, method, and findings from the study were organized within this thesis utilizing the following format:

1. Chapter 1 began with the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study. The importance of the study,

its limitations, and definitions of terms were also included.

2. In Chapter 2 the findings from the review of literature were reported. The status of national transitional services personnel preparation issues was reiterated, and training competencies were identified.

3. Chapter 3 outlined the methods and procedures that were utilized to conduct this study. Defined as a descriptive study, the data collection instruments and procedures supporting this inquiry were detailed. Explanation for the design of Phase I questionnaires and Phase II personal interview instruments, descriptions of the samples, and the methods for conducting both phases were included.

4. In Chapter 4 the results and analysis of Phase I and Phase II data were illustrated. The data results and subsequent analyses were reported by the participating groups: paraprofessionals and administrators.

Conclusions

The analysis of the data collected during this study led to certain conclusions which follow.

1. There is a significant number of employment positions available for paraprofessionals in transition services agencies throughout the United States and California and within the CSULB service region. Further, there are insufficient numbers of trained individuals to assume them. This

conclusion is corroborated by findings from the literature review (Anthony and Blanch 1987; California 1986a, 1986b; Orange County 1987; Whitehead 1987) and by Phase II interviews with agency supervisors.

2. Although previous transition services training is perceived by program administrators as a desirable quality for applicants for paraprofessional positions, few agencies advertise for applicants with this qualification. Only one of the six supervisors interviewed advertised for previous transitional experience due to the paucity of applicants with this training. Furthermore (and as reported by the paraprofessionals), few preservice opportunities are available for such specialized training.

3. To a great extent, local level employing transition agencies assume the responsibility for training their paraprofessionals; and this training is largely delivered through on-the-job experiences rather than through systematic inservice training. This conclusion was supported by findings from the literature review (Frith and Mims 1985; Pickett 1980; Whitehead 1987) and by the Phase I and II data analyses, which identified on-the-job experience as the primary source of training.

4. There are few growth or career mobility opportunities for paraprofessionals working within transition agencies. According to Frith and Mims (1985), the National

Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Special Education and Related Services (1988), and Whitehead (1987), although paraprofessionals continue to assume more responsibilities, their opportunities for advancement, systematic training, and professional supervision have not increased. Corroborating these findings, only one of the six supervisors interviewed reported that the agency offered professional growth or career incentive opportunities. Further, there is a limited number of formalized transitional services training options available to paraprofessionals seeking to upgrade skills and/or to advance from their current position. The literature review identified only five college-level, formalized preservice transition training programs in California, and none was in Southern California (American Federation of Teachers 1986). Of the Phase I and II paraprofessional participants, fewer than half were familiar with university training opportunities offering transition programs within their locale.

5. A definite need exists for transitional services training programs for paraprofessionals. Both Phase I and Phase II data strongly support this conclusion. Over 90% of the Phase I paraprofessional participants indicated an interest in attending a training program that would upgrade their transition skills, and nearly 80% were interested in an undergraduate degree with a specialization in transition

services. Phase II data indicated strong support by all the paraprofessionals for transition training. Additionally, the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Special Education and Related Services (1988) and Whitehead (1987) report a movement away from the more traditional paraprofessional position toward a technician or "para-educator" role. Should this trend continue, the additional demands placed on the "paras" can best be met by an systematic educational training programs.

Further, when asked to respond to the importance of establishing an undergraduate transition training sequence, Phase I administrators were generally supportive. Perhaps an important consideration when reviewing the administrative data is the funding sources of the majority of the programs, i.e., most of the participating administrators were directing externally funded programs of short duration. Therefore, the realization that employment positions may be of a short-term nature and that a more highly trained employee could potentially demand a greater salary might have skewed the responses to this question.

6. With only minor modifications, the five categories of competencies (assessing program and learner needs, planning training/instructional components, implementing training/instructional components, job site training/instruction, and instructional/training evaluation) identified from the

review of literature represent a comprehensive and effective personnel preparation program for transition services personnel. Segments on first aid and terminology from related and interdependent fields of study should be included.

When the Phase I and Phase II competency data were compared to those competencies identified by the literature review, there was strong corroboration. Further, the Phase II competency suggestions supported the Table 1 competencies, particularly when conceptually compared. For example, the review of literature revealed a competency that stated that techniques for instruction of job-related interpersonal and academic skills were important to transition workers. The practitioners, the paraprofessionals and supervisors, rather than utilizing this broader conceptual phrase, identified strategies such as community-based practicum experiences and job shadowing for accomplishing this competency. This type of similarity is consistent throughout the Phase II data and review of literature comparison with the exception of the instruction/training evaluation category; not one respondent from the Phase II interview process indicated the need for a training competency relating to any student or program evaluation.

7. A practicum, or experiential application of conceptual materials, is an essential component of a transitional personnel preparation program. This recommendation

was strongly supported in the literature and during the Phase II interviews.

Recommendations

In the course of this study, the need for further study and program development became apparent. These recommendations follow.

Recommendations for Further Study

In the literature review an intriguing trend regarding the position of paraprofessionals was indicated (National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Special Education and Related Services 1988; Whitehead 1987). As mentioned previously, in some agencies the traditional positions are giving way to a technician or "para-educator" role. Although through the Phase II paraprofessional interviews this movement was apparent, this trend and its implications should be examined more fully within the local area agencies to more precisely determine the shifting roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in transition service agencies. Therefore, a study that tracks the responsibilities of paraprofessionals within a variety of transition agencies over time is recommended.

Recommendations for Program Development

1. The Vocational Education Program at CSULB should proceed with the plan to submit to OSERS a proposal recommending the implementation of an undergraduate transition services training sequence. The proposal should include a curriculum outline that encompasses the competencies identified in Table 1 and those additions advanced during the Phase II interviews. Further, paraprofessionals should be targeted as key program participants; and concerted efforts should be made to provide skills enhancement certification to this group as well as an opportunity to advance to professional status.

2. Tangential to the CSULB program development effort, an examination of participation by local area community colleges in the paraprofessional training movement should be made. Reasoning behind this recommendation is twofold. First, as noted by Norman Howe (1988), OSERS Director of Personnel Preparation, the fundamental skills for this vocation are delivered most efficiently through the community colleges. By design and purpose, the community college seems to be the most appropriate institution for providing the basic level of training required by beginning paraprofessionals. With the implementation of such community college transition programs, articulation agreements between participating colleges and CSULB could be formulated and a

clear career path from the paraprofessional to the professional level could be established. Second, because of the paucity of training programs and the present and growing need for trained transition paraprofessionals in the CSULB service region, the presence of multiple training opportunities should be encouraged.

Appendices

Appendix A

Paraprofessional Survey

QUESTIONNAIRE A

Job Title:_____ Agency Affiliation:_____

City of Residence:_____ Highest Degree Attained:_____

This questionnaire is designed to poll the attitudes and interests of persons who are currently working as: Job Coaches, Job Trainers, Adjustment Workers, Vocational Aides, Teacher's Aides, Instructional Aides, Special Education Aides, Career Technicians, Placement Officers, and Job Developers. We would appreciate your cooperation in answering the following questions as accurately and completely as possible. Thank you in advance for your time.

1. How long have you been in your current position?

   O less than 1 year
   O 1 to 2 years
   O 2 to 3 years
   O more than 3 years

2. Did you have specific training for your current position?

   O Yes O No

   a. If yes, please indicate where and how you received your training? (Check all that apply)

   O college courses O inservices provided by your employer
   O experience from a previous position

3. In your commuting vicinity, are there university courses that offer skills training in working with special needs students in transition from school to the workplace?

   O Yes O No O Uncertain

4. Are you interested in taking university courses designed to upgrade your skills in working with special needs students?

   O Very interested O Somewhat interested O Not interested

5. Would you be interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree which focused on the attainment of skills necessary in working with special needs populations?

   O Very interested O Somewhat interested O Not interested

6. Following is a list of components that could be included in an specialization area in vocational education and transition services in an undergraduate degree program. Using the scale below each item, please circle the number that best represents your opinion about the importance of that components inclusion in a degree curriculum.

   a. General characteristics of special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

b. Identification and placement of special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

c. Vocational assessment of special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

d. Establishing Individualized Education Programs (IEP):

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

e. Coordination of support agencies - i.e. interagency collaboration:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

f. Modifying facilities to accomodate the training of special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

g. Curriculum modification for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

h. Instructional techniques for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

i. Techniques for instruction of job-related interpersonal skills:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

j. Techniques for instruction of job-related academic skills:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

k. Evaluation and grading procedures for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

l. Preparing transitional programs for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

m. Strategies in working with employers and employees in industry:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

n. Job placement and follow-up for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

7. Please state any other areas that you would like to see included in an undergraduate degree transitional services program. Be as definitive as possible.

(Prepared by Judith A. Morehouse)

Appendix B

Administrator Survey

Job Title:_____ Agency Affiliation:_____

QUESTIONNAIRE B

This questionnaire is designed to poll the attitudes and opinions of individuals who are currently administering programs that assist special needs learners in acquiring vocational skills, finding gainful employment, and/or acquiring counseling and other support services. We would appreciate your cooperation in answering the following questions. Thank you in advance for your time.

PART I

1. Within the context of your program, how many paraprofessionals (positions not requiring an undergraduate degree) do you presently employ?

   _____Full-time employees _____Part-time employees

2. Is prior experience in working with special needs students/clients an employment requirement for your paraprofessional positions?

   O Yes O No

3. Regarding the paraprofessionals you currently employ, of those who have had previous experience, where have they received this training? (Please check all that apply)

   O Inservice provided by employer O Previous on-the-job experience

   O Community College program O University courses

   O Uncertain

4. Of the paraprofessionals employed within your agency, how many, in your opinion, would be interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree in vocational education and transition services?

   _____

PART II

5. Using the rating scale immediately below this question please circle the number that best represents your opinion.

   How important is the establishment of a specialization area in vocational education and transition services as an undergraduate degree program?

   5 4 3 2 1
   Very important Important Unimportant

6. Following is a list of personnel competencies that could be included in an undergraduate degree program in transition services. Using the scale below each item, please circle the number that best represents your opinion about the importance of each competency statement in a degree curriculum.

   a. General characteristics of special needs learners:

   5 4 3 2 1
   Very important Important Unimportant

b. Identification and placement procedures for special needs learners in vocational education:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

c. Vocational assessment of special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

d. Establishing vocational education and transition services components in Individualized Education Programs (IEP):

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

e. Coordination of support agencies - i.e. interagency collaboration:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

f. Modifying facilities to accomodate the vocational training of special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

g. Curriculum modification for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

h. Instructional techniques for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

i. Techniques for instruction of job-related interpersonal and academic skills:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

j. Evaluation and grading procedures for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

k. Preparing transitional programs for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

l. Strategies in working with employers and employees in industry:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

m. Job placement and follow-up services for special needs learners:

5	4	3	2	1
Very important		Important		Unimportant

7. Please state any other areas that you would like to see included in an undergraduate degree program in vocational education and transition services. Be as definitive as possible.

(Prepared by Judith A. Morehouse)

Appendix C

Cover Letter for Survey Participants

Dear Questionnaire Participant:

This questionnaire is part of a research project which has two objectives:

(1) Determining the need throughout California for trained support personnel working with handicapped youth and adults; and

(2) Identifying competencies that should be included in a training program to enhance the skills of these support personnel.

The following definitions should be used in completing this questionnaire:

Special needs learners: youth and adults with disabilities who are in need of support services in order to succeed in education and employment settings.

Transition services: assistance provided to handicapped youth and adults as they progress from secondary or post-secondary environments to employment in the community.

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs): an annual planning process for determining the education service needs of school-aged handicapped students.

Thank you very much for your assistance in this project; your input is vital to the project's success.

PLEASE TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE TO BEGIN QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix D

Agencies Participating in Survey

Ms. Elaine Bamberg, Executive Director
Developmental Disabilities Center
Union Bank Tower (Central Tower)
500 South Main Street
Orange, CA 92668

Ms. Corinne Beacham, Specialist
Special Needs
Regional Occupational Program
1001 Presidio Square
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Ms. Grace Hanson, Coordinator
Rehabilitation Services
CRTC Production Support Services
536 North Vincent
Covina, CA 91722

Mr. Dan Hulbert, Director
Career Assessment and Placement Center
Whittier Area Cooperative Special Education
9401 South Painter Avenue
Whittier, CA 90605

Ms. Jeanette Johnson, Administrator
Vocational Education
Huntington Beach Union High School District
10251 Yorktown Avenue
Huntington Beach, CA 92646

Ms. Paula Margeson, Director
Dale McIntosh Center
150 West Cerritos, Bldg. 4
Anaheim, CA 92805

Ms. Caryl Miller, Coordinator
Special Education
Orange County Department of Education
P.O. Box 9050
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-9050

Dr. George Osborn, Dean
Occupational Education
Rancho Santiago Community College
17th at Bristol
Santa Ana, CA 92706

Ms. Linda O'Neal
Horizons
Irvine Unified School District
5050 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, CA 92714

Ms. M. L. Oxford, Coordinator
Workability II
Educational Transition Center
650 University Avenue, #200
Sacramento, CA 95825

Ms. Paula Sawyer, District Administrator
California Department of Rehabilitation
3530 Atlantic Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90807

Mr. Mark Stevens, Special Education
Los Angeles Unified School District
644 West 17th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Ms. Lisa Stie, Coordinator
Workability I
Educational Transition Center
650 University Avenue, #200
Sacramento, CA 95825

Ms. Christine Terry, Coordinator
Disabled Student Programs and Services
Cypress Community College
9200 Valley View, Bldg. AE 8-3
Cypress, CA 90630

Ms. Nancy Templeton
Los Angeles Unified School District
8049 Fairchild Avenue
Canoga Park, CA 91306

Appendix E

Paraprofessional Interview Instrument

Paraprofessional Personal Interview
Questions

Interviewee Information:

Employing Agency: _____
Length of Time in Current Position: _____
Job Title: _____
(Attach copy of job description if received)
Educational Background: _____
Previous Experience, Length and Source(s): _____
_____

Personal Preparation Needs:

1. Status of Preservicing

Was previous experience required for your current position? If yes, please identify the required experiences.

Where did you receive your prior experience, e.g., on-the-job training, inservices, college courses?

2. Training Resources

Are there transitional skills enhancement training programs available to paraprofessionals? If yes, could you please describe these programs and identify their sources (e.g., local college programs, agency inservices, university courses).

Are you interested in: (a) university skill enhancement courses that would lead to a certificate indicating transitional skills expertise or (b) a bachelor's degree with an emphasis on transitional services?

Have your responsibilities changed since you began working here? If so, how? Do you see any additional changes in responsibility for your position within the next 6 months? Year? Two years?

Please identify any training received that assisted you in acquiring any new skills necessary to perform new job responsibilities.

Identification of Competencies:

1. Employment Context

In your opinion, what are the most critical/important aspects of your job?

2. Skills Utilized

In your opinion, what are the most important skills you must have to work with your clients/students?

What, if any, additional skills would help you better serve your clients/students?

If you chose to take additional training courses that would increase your skills in working with the handicapped, what topics would you like to see included in such courses? Please describe.

Appendix F

Supervisor Interview Instrument

Supervisor Personal Interview Questions

Interviewee Information:

Employing Agency: _____
Length of Time in Current Position: _____
Job Title: _____
(Attach copy of job description if received)
Educational Background: _____
Previous Experience, Length and Source(s): _____
_____

Need for Trained Personnel:

Are there current employment openings for trained transitional services paraprofessionals within your agency? If yes, please state the number of current openings and describe their responsibilities.

When you have employment openings, do you have specific qualifications for the personnel you interview? If yes, could you please give a description of these qualifications.

When you do have employment positions, approximately how many applicants do you receive for each? Of these applicants, how many meet the qualifications your agency requires for these positions?

To be hired as a paraprofessional within your agency, do the applicants need to have previous transitional services experience? If yes, what does your agency consider related previous experience? If no, why is previous related experience not required?

Does your agency offer incentives and/or opportunities for professional growth to your paraprofessionals? If yes, could you please describe them.

Identification of Competencies:

a. Employment Context

In your opinion, what are the most critical/important aspects of the paraprofessional's job?

b. Skills Utilized

In your opinion, what are the most important skills a paraprofessional must have to work with your clients/students?

If you were planning a training program for paraprofessionals working within your agency, what within the following categories would you include?

Skills:

Materials:

Information:

Appendix G

Agencies Participating in Personal Interviews

Association for Retarded Citizens
9501 Washburn Road
Downey, CA 90242

City Education and Employment Services
1346 Foothill Boulevard, #304
La Canada, CA 91011

Coastline Regional Occupational Program
1001 Presidio Square
Costa Mesa, Ca 92626

East San Gabriel Regional Occupational Program
Job Coaching Program
1024 West Workman
West Covina, CA 91790

Irvine Unified School District
Horizons Program
5050 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, CA 92714

Social Vocational Services, Inc.
23862 Hawthorne Boulevard, #100
Torrance, CA 90505

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